

# NPL Site Narrative for Fort Devens

## FORT DEVENS

### Fort Devens, Massachusetts

**Federal Register Notice:** [November 21, 1989](#)

**Conditions at proposal (July 14, 1989):** Fort Devens is 35 miles west of Boston, Massachusetts, at the intersection of four townships: Ayer and Shirley (in Middlesex County) and Lancaster and Harvard (in Worcester County). The area is largely rural residential.

Founded in 1917, Fort Devens has as its primary mission the training of active duty personnel to support various Army units. Fort Devens Sudbury Training Annex, 12 miles to the southwest, is also being proposed for the NPL at this time.

Fort Devens covers 9,416 acres and can be divided into three areas: the 1,013-acre North Post; the 3,247-acre Cold Spring Brook Area, which is in the central part of the fort; and the 5,156-acre South Post. The first two areas are separated by West Main Street between Shirley and Ayer; the Cold Spring Brook area and South Post are separated by State Route 2.

Fort Devens is participating in the Installation Restoration Program (IRP), established in 1978. Under this program, the Department of Defense seeks to identify, investigate, and clean up contamination from hazardous materials. IRP studies have identified 46 potential hazardous waste areas including: the 15-acre Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) range, where

explosives and unusable munitions have been detonated or burned in open unlined pits since 1979; the 50-acre sanitary landfill, where household wastes, military refuse, asbestos, construction debris, waste oil, and incinerator ash have been dumped since the 1930s; and Building 1650, where battery acids, PCBs, pesticides, and solvents have been stored.

Monitoring wells near the sanitary landfill contain cadmium, lead, mercury, iron, and arsenic, according to tests conducted in 1987 by an Army contractor. An estimated 21,700 fort employees and Ayer residents obtain drinking water from wells within 3 miles of the landfill; a Fort Devens well is 1,670 feet from the sanitary landfill.

The 1987 tests also found arsenic, chromium, nickel, and lead in surface water near the sanitary landfill. An 8-mile section of the Nashua River lies within the fort's boundaries. The 630-acre Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge is in the east central portion of Fort Devens on land the Army deeded to the Department of the Interior in 1973. An 83-acre wetland is in the refuge northeast of EOD.

**Status (November 21, 1989):** IRP activities continue.

*[The description of the site (release) is based on information available at the time the site was evaluated with the HRS. The description may change as additional information is gathered on the sources and extent of contamination. See [56 FR 5600](#), February 11, 1991, or subsequent FR notices.]*